

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
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TAGS: EAID, EWWT, WS, NZ

SUBJECT: WESTERN SAMOA CRITICIZES NEW ZEALAND, PACIFIC FORUM LINE

1. WESTERN SAMOAN GOVERNMENT ISSUED FOLLOWING PRESS
RELEASE MAY 11 CONCERNING THE LACK OF PROGRESS MADE
IN ESTABLISHING THE PACIFIC FORUM SHIPPING LINE,
LAYING PART OF THE BLAME ON THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT,
AND INDICATING IT IS MOVING AHEAD WITH PLANS TO
ACQUIRE A ROLL-ON ROLL-OFF VESSEL TO BE SUB-CHARTERED
BY WESTERN SAMOA TO THE FORUM LINE. FULL TEXT FOLLOWS.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

THE WESTERN SAMOA MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS,
THE HON. ASI EIKENI EXPRESSED TODAY (MAY 11) GRAVE
RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE PROPOSED PACIFIC
FORUM LINE.

"THE ECONOMIC WELL BEING OF THE PACIFIC PEOPLE RESTS
VERY LARGELY ON AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.
BUT AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CANNOT
MOVE AHEAD IF IT IS NOT LINKED TO A GOOD COMMUNICATIONS
SYSTEM. FOR THIS REASON IT HAS BEEN THE VIEW OF THIS
COUNTRY FOR A LONG TIME THAT SHIPPING AND AIR LINKS
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ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT," HE SAID.
"SEVEN YEARS AGO ON AN INITIATIVE OF THE SAMOAN
GOVERNMENT THE PACIFIC COUNTRIES WERE INVITED TO
APIA TO DISCUSS REGIONAL SHIPPING LINKS. THE FORUM
TOOK THE PROJECT UP AND REGIONAL SHIPPING BECAME A
PERENNIAL TOPIC IN THE FORUM AGENDA.
LAST YEAR IT SEEMED THAT THE REGIONAL SHIPPING LINE

PROJECT HAD REACHED THE TURNING POINT. THE PROMISE HOWEVER DOES NOT TALLY WITH THE RECORD. SINCE THE LAST FORUM MEETING PAPUA NEW GUINEA HAS LAUNCHED A SHIPPING LINE WHICH WILL TAKE OVER THE MOST LUCRATIVE ROUTE OF THE PROPOSED REGIONAL LINE. LATTERLY TONGA HAS INDICATED THAT IT WILL JOINT THE COLUMBUS LINE AND OTHER LINES IN A SHIPPING VENTURE WHICH WILL TAKE OVER EVEN MORE ROUTES OF THE PROPOSED PACIFIC FORUM LINE.

MEANTIME WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PROPOSED PACIFIC FORUM LINE? THE RECENT DECISION BY A MEETING OF OFFICIALS AS THE INTERIM BOARD OF THE PROPOSED PACIFIC FORUM LINE TO SEEK A GENERAL MANAGER DOES NOT SEEM TO LEAD US NEARER TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SHIPPING LINE. THE PURSUIT OF THE ELUSIVE PACIFIC FORUM LINE HAS BEEN PLAGUED BY FORMULAE AND FEASIBILITY REPORTS. NOTWITHSTANDING THE RECENT STATEMENTS ABOUT PROGRESS THERE APPEARS NO END TO FORMULAE AND FEASIBILITY REPORTS IN THE IMMEDIATELY FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IT IS HIGH TIME THAT WE SOUL SEARCHED ON SOME OF THE BASIC QUESTIONS "WHITHER ARE WE GOING?" WILL A MODIFIED SHIPPING LINE PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A VIABLE COMMERCIAL VENTURE? WILL THE MODIFIED FORUM LINE PROVIDE A REASONABLY ADEQUATE ANSWER TO THE PACIFIC SHIPPING NEEDS? IS A PACIFIC FORUM LINE WITHOUT NEW ZEALAND SUPPORT POSSIBLE? IF THIS SUPPORT IS NOT FORTHCOMING ARE WE NOT RAISING FALSE HOPES? AND IF WE HAVE RAISED FALSE HOPES TO WHAT EXTENT ARE WE (PACIFIC GOVERNMENT LEADERS) COMPROMISED OR ARE GOING TO BE COMPROMISED

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BY FAILING TO DELIVER AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT OF DEVELOPMENT?

PART OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE HAVE ALLOWED OURSELVES EITHER CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY TO GLOSS OVER BASIC ISSUES BY THE GLIB USE OF POLITICAL RHETORIC. FOR EXAMPLE, RHETORIC AND FORMULAE SHOULD MAKE CLEAR WHAT THE ISSUES AFFECTING THE NEW ZEALAND UNIONS ARE. IF A ROLL-ON ROLL-OFF (RORO) SHIP CANNOT OPERATE ON THE DIRECT ROUTE ENVISAGED IN THE MARKETING SURVEY, IT WILL HAVE TO DO A CIRCULAR ROUTE AND THIS MEANS "CROSS-TRADING" WILL THE NEW ZEALAND MARITIME UNION ALLOW A CROSS-TRADING VESSEL IN THE PACIFIC TO ENTER A NEW ZEALAND PORT?

IF A RORO VESSEL IS USED TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL IT WILL PICK THE EYES OUT OF THE UNION STEAMSHIP TRADE. IS THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT PREPOARED TO ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN?

CLEARLY, THE COOPERATION AND GOODWILL OF THE NEW ZEALAND WHARF AND MARITIME UNIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE VIABILITY

OF THE PACIFIC FORUM LINE VENTURE. THE MAIN REASON
FOR THE EXISTENCE OF UNIONS IS TO PROMOTE GROUP
ACTION TO PROTECT THE INTEREST OF THE LITTLE MAN.
THE PACIFIC ISLAND PEOPLES ARE VERY MUCH THE SMALL
PEOPLE IN THE SHIPPING EXERCISE.
I DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE SITUATION IS HOPELESS.
ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS BLEAK I WOULD NOT LIKE AT THIS
POINT TO WRITE-OFF THE PACIFIC FORUM LINE. MY GOVERNMENT
IS PREPARED TO MAKE ONE LAST EFFORT TO SAVE
THE PROJECT I.E. THE PACIFIC FORUM LINE.I AM HAPPY
TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN SAMOA
INTENDS TO ACQUIRE A ROLL-ON ROLL-OFF VESSEL AND
ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE WITH CONSULTANTS TO OBTAIN
THIS WITHIN THREE MONTHS. THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO
SUB-CHARTER THIS RORO VESSEL TO THE PROPOSED PACIFIC
FORUM LINE. I INVITE THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT TO
MATCH THE SAMOAN GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE IN A POSTIVIE
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ATTEMPT TO END THE -6-YEAR FARCE. ON THE OTHER HAND
IF THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT WILL NOT RESPOND POSITIVELY
THEN I CALL ON THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT AND ALL THE
OTHER COUNTRIES WHO HAVE SO FAR BEEN INVOLVED IN
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PACIFIC FORUM LINE THAT WE SHOULD
DO THE DECENT THING BY OUR PEOPLE AND CALL IT A DAY,"
THE MINISTER SAID. END TEXT.
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